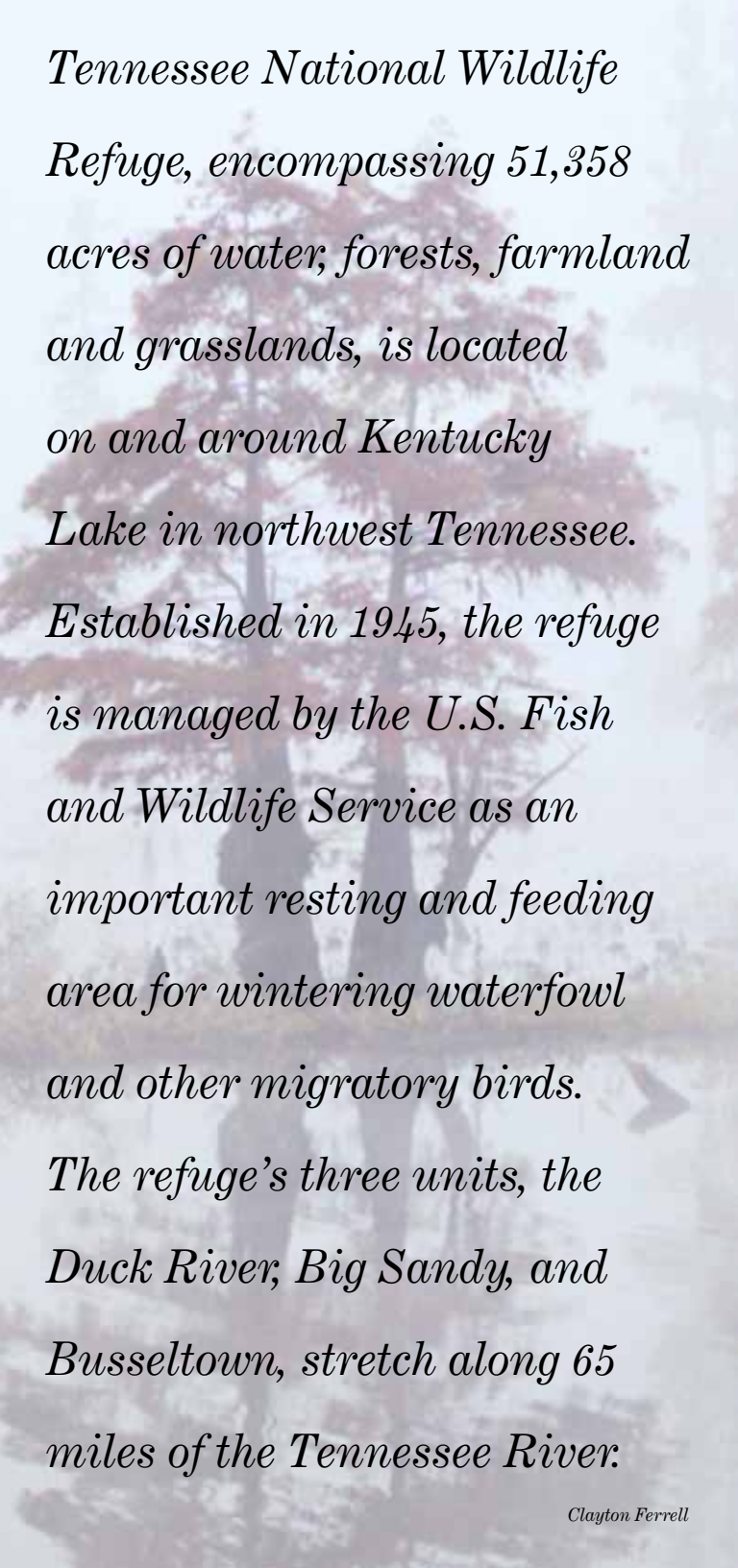


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Tennessee

*National Wildlife Refuge*





*Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, encompassing 51,358 acres of water, forests, farmland and grasslands, is located on and around Kentucky Lake in northwest Tennessee. Established in 1945, the refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an important resting and feeding area for wintering waterfowl and other migratory birds. The refuge's three units, the Duck River, Big Sandy, and Busseltown, stretch along 65 miles of the Tennessee River.*



*This blue goose, designed by J. N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

## **In Years Past**

In 1937 a flood occurred in the Tennessee and Ohio River Valleys, causing widespread devastation to communities, farms, and families. The following year, in 1938, the newly formed Tennessee Valley Authority started construction on Kentucky Dam. When the dam was completed in 1944, Kentucky Lake was born, and the following year, in 1945, Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge was established by President Harry S. Truman on the newly flooded lands and areas adjacent to the river.



## **Wildlife**

The refuge's primary management objective is to provide food and protection for waterfowl. Currently refuge habitats include agricultural crops such as corn, milo, and winter wheat; natural plants that grow in moist soil conditions, vegetated wetlands, and forest lands. The resulting combination of agricultural grains, natural foods and protected areas, sustains waterfowl through the winter months. On the refuge they are able to forage for the food and nutrients they need to support their return to spring breeding grounds in good condition. The refuge's diversity of habitats also supports breeding,

*cover photo:  
Clayton Ferrell*

*Patrick Martin*



wintering, and migration habitat for 301 bird species, and habitat for 51 mammals, 89 reptiles and amphibians, and 144 species of fish. Large populations of white-tailed deer can be found throughout the

area, along with smaller animals such as raccoons, squirrels, beavers, rabbits, and turkeys.

### **Migratory Birds**

Tennessee Refuge's importance in the Mississippi Flyway migration route can be seen each winter when large flocks of waterfowl stop by the refuge to feed and rest. The refuge winters approximately 200,000 ducks each year with peaks to 320,000. During the past ten years geese numbers have peaked at over 19,000. The refuge is a uniquely significant wintering area for American black ducks within the Mississippi Flyway. The refuge peaks at 5,000 to 10,000 ducks.

Historically, the refuge wintered 20-30% of the black ducks occurring in the Mississippi Flyway. Of the 24 species of ducks using the refuge, mallards are the most common, followed by gadwall, wigeon, black duck, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, pintail, ring-necked duck, canvasback, lesser scaup, bufflehead, goldeneye, and ruddy duck. The colorful wood duck makes its home here throughout the year, nesting in natural tree cavities as well as in artificial nest boxes provided by refuge staff. In recent years, multiple king rails nesting in emergent wetland areas have been found on the Duck River Unit.

*Clayton Ferrell*



*Barron Crauford*







A host of neo-tropical songbirds, birds that winter in the tropics and nest in North America, fill the skies with color and song upon their arrival in spring. Among these are the indigo bunting, common yellowthroat, prothonotary warbler, yellow-billed cuckoo, and summer tanager. Other migrants include several species of shorebirds, raptors, and wading birds. Among the resident species that may be seen throughout the year are Eastern bluebird, American robin, red-winged blackbird, Carolina wren, and American goldfinch. In the winter the American bald eagle can be found in large numbers on the refuge.

### **Other Wildlife**

A hotspot for fish diversity, Tennessee Refuge can boast greater fish species diversity than any other inland national wildlife refuge in the country. Some of the more elusive animals found on the refuge are river otters, bobcats, coyotes, and mink. Numerous species of snakes, frogs, turtles, and insects also make the refuge home.

### **Managing for Wildlife**

During the spring and summer, water is removed from the shallows of several impoundments to allow for the germination of natural wetland plants. After the plants have matured and produced an abundance of seeds, the impoundments are flooded. Waterfowl and other marsh birds feast upon these natural seed sources. Drawdowns in the moist soil areas also produce mud-flats that nourish shorebirds during their spring and fall migrations.

As in years past, select refuge lands are offered to local farmers under the cooperative farming program. In exchange for a share of the crop, local farmers cultivate and plant the refuge's fertile lands to produce corn, milo, and winter wheat for waterfowl.



*Clayton Ferrell*

The refuge's share is left unharvested in the field. Flooded agricultural fields of unharvested crops draw ducks and geese onto the refuge where they are able to feed and rest. Healthy, well-nourished ducks and geese depart the refuge in early spring.

*Clayton Ferrell**Joan Stevens*

The refuge's forest management plan emphasizes improved habitat for forest nesting birds. During the late 1800's and early 1900's vast expanses of mature trees were clear cut to fuel the industrial revolution. The impacts of massive forest clearing, and increased control of wildfires greatly influenced the present condition of the forest. The end result is a forest with trees of similar age, with poorly developed crowns, and in a stagnant stage of growth. The forest's condition has impacted many bird species by reducing suitable nesting and foraging habitat. In an effort to restore more natural forest conditions, a forest management plan has been developed and measures taken to carefully alter the forest structure. Using very selective harvest techniques, the forest has been thinned to reduce overcrowded trees, and to allow the remaining trees to grow larger. Openings in the canopy allow vegetation on the forest floor to become denser. This type of forest management improves habitat for birds and many other species of wildlife.

*Matt Conner*

Tennessee Refuge supports wood duck reproduction success with an active wood duck nest box program. Large numbers of "woodies" can be found in refuge wetlands, nesting in artificial nest boxes, and in natural tree cavities.



Each year during late summer refuge employees attach bands to the legs of these colorful “summer ducks” in order to gather information about hatching success, survival, and harvest pressure.

### Enjoy Your Visit

Visitor use areas are open daily during daylight hours, except for select areas. Wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, photography, boating, and canoeing are all popular uses of the refuge.



*Fishing* – In early spring, Kentucky Lake is known for some of the best crappie fishing in the nation. Later in the season, bass and catfish delight anglers throughout the lake. About half of the refuge is located on Kentucky Lake and most of the refuge’s waters are open to fishing year-round. Please note that some areas are closed seasonally when waterfowl or bald eagles are present to provide them sanctuary. Fishing brochures detailing regulations are available at the refuge office in Paris, Tennessee and kiosks at the main entrance of each unit.



*Hunting* – Hunting is permitted for deer, squirrel, raccoon, resident Canada goose and wild turkey. A Refuge Annual Hunting Permit (\$12.50 each) is required for hunting (see refuge specific hunting regulations). Along with regular hunting seasons, quota hunts are available for deer, and are held by means of a drawing/permit system. A separate hunting regulation brochure is available from the refuge office.





## *Wildlife Observations and Photography*

- **V.L. Childs Observation Deck** – On the Big Sandy Unit near Britton Ford Peninsula off Swamp Creek Road. Open year round with spotting scopes and interpretive signs.
- **Bennett's Creek Observation Deck** – On the Big Sandy Peninsula north of the town of Big Sandy. Open year round with spotting scope. A good location to view bald eagles in the winter.
- **Duck River Bottoms Overlook** – Off Birdsong Road or highway 191. Open year round providing an excellent view overlooking the river and Duck River Bottoms. Deck located at end of ¼ mile hiking trail.
- **Pintail Point Observation Blind** – In Duck River Bottoms off Haul Road. Open year round providing views of waterfowl in the winter and many other birds in other seasons. Blind located at end of short 150 yard trail.
- **Blue Goose Boulevard Interpretive Drive** – In Duck River Bottoms off Refuge Lane. Open from March 16 – November 15 allows visitors to view wildlife with interpretive signs explaining the habitat types in the bottoms and refuge management practices.



## *Hiking*

- **Britton Ford Hiking Trail** – On the Britton Ford Peninsula. Open from March 16 – November 15 offering a 2.5 mile moderate loop trail through the woods with two scenic overlooks, interpretive signs and an outdoor classroom.
- **Chickasaw National Recreation Trail** – On Big Sandy Peninsula north of the town of Big Sandy. 1.1 mile easy hiking trail open year round with interpretive signs offering the hiker a woodland trail that winds through a historic homestead and gristmill site.





*Group Programs* – Educators are encouraged to use the refuge as a fully equipped “field laboratory.” Special environmental education programs are available for clubs and school groups. Call the refuge office at 731/642 2091 at least two weeks in advance to schedule your event. Environmental education is emphasized, and teachers are encouraged to utilize the refuge for group study, with the refuge interpretive staff providing assistance when needed.



## Refuge Regulations

Refuge boundary signs delineate refuge property behind the sign. “Area Closed” signs are erected to minimize disturbance to waterfowl or other wildlife, and for public safety.

Searching for and removal of objects of antiquity is prohibited.

Carrying, possessing, or discharging fireworks, or explosives on a national wildlife refuge is prohibited. Firearms are permitted in accordance with state law. Weapons legally possessed for hunting are the same as those prescribed by the state of Tennessee.

Disturbing or feeding wildlife, and collecting plants is strictly prohibited.

Pets on a leash are permitted. Dogs under verbal control are allowed during refuge hunts.

Camping is prohibited.

Open fires are prohibited.

ATV’s are not allowed.

Bicycling and horseback riding is permitted on established roads during normal public use hours.

Use of artificial light (including vehicle lights) to observe wildlife is prohibited.

Boats must be removed from the refuge after each day’s use.

Facilities accessible to the physically challenged are available.

# Tennessee

## National Wildlife Refuge



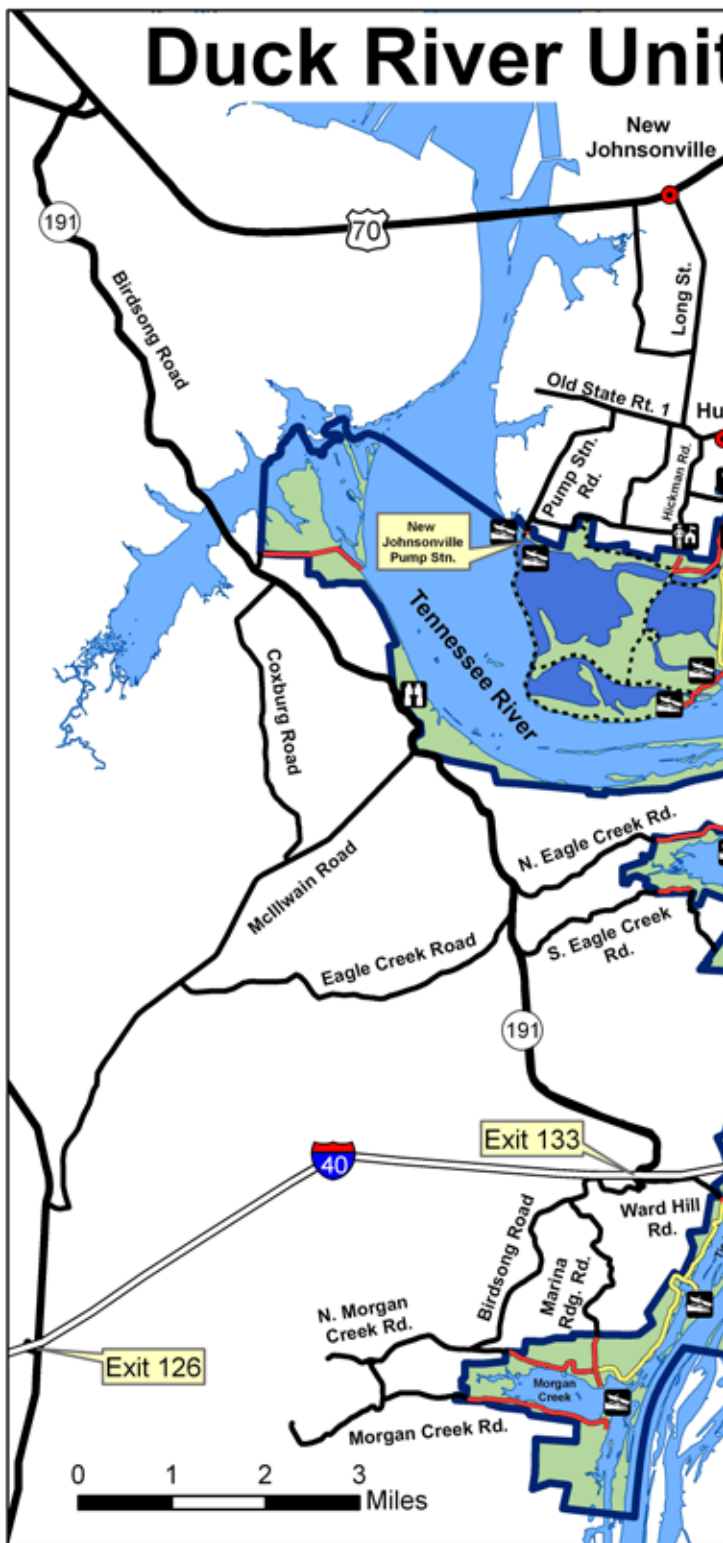
# Busseltown Unit



## Legend

- Paved access road
  - Refuge Road - open year round
  - Road Closed Nov. 15 - Mar. 15
  - Refuge Boundary
  - Refuge Land
  - Kentucky Lake
  - Impoundments
  - Boat Ramps
  - Information Kiosk
- 0 1 2 3 Miles

# Duck River Unit







# Big Sandy Unit

0 1 2 3 Miles



To  
Paris



Elkhorn Nobles  
Rd

Oak Grove Rd

Elkhorn Rd

Elkhorn Rd

West Sandy Creek

Old Springville  
Rd

Pleasant  
Grove Rd

Broadview  
Rd

Poplar Grove Rd

69A

79

East Antioch Rd

West Antioch Rd

Antioch  
Harbor  
Rd

Port Rd

Mansard Island  
Marina

Swamp Creek

V.L. Childs  
Obs. Deck

Br  
Hi

Big Eagle



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<http://www.fws.gov/TennesseeRefuge>

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
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